

(Remarks as prepared)



Good morning, it is a real pleasure to be with you. I am here this morning because I received some very good letters on the topic of climate change. Your letters were informed, thoughtful and full of passion. Thank you for taking the time to write me. And thanks to your teacher, Karissa Baker for inviting me to talk with you today.

Before Congress, I was a teacher. I believe the voices of students are very important. And I believe that the learning that takes place inside a classroom can shape lives and change the world.

I'm here today to talk about how we can respond to the challenge of global climate change. I am going to share my perspective and then I want to hear your ideas, questions and concerns.

It is clear from your letters that you know the key facts:

- Climate change is real;
- It is caused by humans;
- And unless we start cutting emissions sharply, climate change will make the world a very difficult place for us to live.

The challenge of confronting climate change is unlike any other our country - or the world - has ever faced. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050 is a scientific challenge that will stretch us to invent, innovate and explore. It is an economic challenge that will reshape how we produce, consume, and live our day-to-day lives. And it is a political challenge - that is the challenge I am facing in Congress.

Our country needs your help on each of these.

- America needs scientists and engineers to discover and design solutions.
- We need entrepreneurs to create new, cleaner products.
- And we need public officials with the ability to explain complicated problems like climate change and the courage to act when science shows us we must.

America needs your help because climate change is a problem we must solve. Climate change is a danger to our economy, national security, public health and ecosystems around the planet. And it threatens every other country in the world - in some places droughts will threaten food production; in other areas rising sea levels will put entire countries underwater.

I believe America has a unique responsibility to lead the fight against climate change. Since 1850, the United States has produced 30 percent of total global greenhouse emissions. Until very recently - when China took over the top spot - the U.S. was the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. That is a legacy we cannot ignore and other nations will not let us forget.

Climate change is a problem we must solve, but it is also a problem we can solve. We can employ science to create the solutions to climate change and we can modernize our economy with green technology. We are still working to pass a comprehensive climate bill in Congress. But the federal government is already taking action to avert the worst consequences of climate change.

In 2009, I voted for the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. TIME magazine called this bill "the most ambitious energy legislation in history." It invested \$90 Billion in clean energy research and construction. Those investments are creating new opportunities in our community. Just last month I cut the ribbon on St. Paul's first electric vehicle with Governor Dayton and Mayor Coleman. Each of your letters was unique. But many had a shared sense of urgency to act. I feel that sense of urgency.

We cannot afford to wait until the political consensus is as solid as the scientific consensus. Choosing to confront climate change will not be universally popular - but it is absolutely essential. By the time everyone agrees, it may be too late.

This is a moment for leadership: in Congress, in the White House, and leadership in the classrooms of St. Paul. So what will you do? If you believe we must take action, how will you continue to make your voice heard? You used your voice to get my attention. Well - you have my attention. Who's next?

Talk to your friends, and family and neighbors, state legislators, mayor and city council members. Your voice CAN make a difference. If you aren't talking to your elected officials I guarantee you that someone else will.

At last year's United Nations Climate Summit in Copenhagen, President Obama said: "Our generation's response to this challenge will be judged by history, for if we fail to meet it - boldly, swiftly, and together - we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe."

This generation is your generation. You are not responsible for creating the problem of climate change, but the responsibility of solving it is yours. The President knows what you and I know - big challenges are also big opportunities. And the President believes what I believe - that with your engagement, creativity, and conviction, there is no limit to what we can accomplish as a country. The President and I are calling you to action.

Future generations are depending on all of us. As a member of Congress, I take my responsibility to prevent climate change seriously - but I can't do it alone.

I look forward to discussing this issue with you today. Thank you.